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TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Report of the ad hoc Panel

Note by the secretariat

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with decision 12/COP.3 of the Conference of the Parties, an ad hoc panel composed of 10 experts on traditional knowledge was appointed to develop further appropriate criteria in line with future work on benchmarks and indicators to be used by National Focal Points, as follows:

(a) To measure the reciprocity between traditional and modern knowledge and/or promote it;

(b) To assess how networks and mechanisms created by the secretariat (regional networks, regional coordinating bodies, national focal points) are incorporating traditional and local knowledge in their work programmes;

(c) To assess the socio-economic and ecological benefits of traditional knowledge in the light of environmental changes.

2. The ad hoc Panel was subsequently convened in Matera, Italy, from 8 to 12 May 2000. Mr. Pietro Laureano (Italy), was elected Chairman of the meeting and Mrs. Corinne Wacker (Switzerland) was elected Vice-Chair of the meeting. Mr. Falah Abounukta (Syrian Arab Republic) was elected Rapporteur. The members of the Panel and other participants at the Matera meeting are listed in annex I.

3. The UNCCD secretariat briefly summarized the work carried out during previous years. The participants were informed of the work on benchmarks and indicators, on traditional knowledge, on surveys and evaluations of existing networks and on the terms of reference of the Committee of Science and Technology and of the ad hoc panels.

4. Based on decision 12/COP.3, the Panel had a detailed discussion on the terms of reference defined in paragraph 1 above, and agreed to focus on recommendations at the national level and to underline the socio-economic and ecological benefits of traditional knowledge. Such knowledge should be considered and promoted as an important tool of sustainable development to alleviate poverty and environmental degradation. Moreover, the Panel highlighted that:

(a) Benchmarks and indicators had a significant importance on the process of reciprocity between traditional and modern technology;

(b) The recommendation in ICCD/COP(3)/CST/3, paragraph 26 (b) (iii), had been taken into account in other relevant decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

5. The Panel reviewed the reports presented by the consultants (annex I).

II. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

6. The ad hoc Panel on Traditional Knowledge reviewed the various articles of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification relating to traditional knowledge and considered that those addressed, in particular, to local populations in the affected areas were articles 2, 16(g) , 17(c), 18.2(a), and 18.2(b). Within the spirit of the Convention, the Panel recalls that the Convention aims to act towards the prevention, recovery and rehabilitation of sensitive areas so as to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability and viability.

7. The Panel recommends to the States Parties of the Convention that they take appropriate measures in order to implement mechanisms of assessment according to their respective capacities by taking into account the social, cultural and economic aspects of each Party, and in order to carry out

activities of evaluation and promotion. The national liaison centres should be informed of those measures.

8. Considering that the proposed criteria take into account, whenever possible, prospective future work on benchmarks and indicators, the Panel proposes, within the traditional knowledge field, an assessment of the following criteria:

(a) The use of techniques at the local level in order to improve the living conditions of the populations in the affected areas;

(b) The ability of the population to adapt as appropriate the proposed technologies in the affected areas;

(c) The validity of the technology in the long term;

(d) The institutional measures of the States in accordance with their ability to develop an inventory of traditional knowledge and create a context favourable to its safeguarding, valorization and promotion;

(e) The actions carried out in order to encourage the diffusion of traditional knowledge and of the innovations in this field;

(f) The actions of the national liaison centres according to their ability to allow the production and promotion of local knowledge;

(g) The proposed technologies in accordance with their impact within a larger context with reference to the specific problem to be solved, that is, *inter alia*, the social, cultural and economic context as well as an integrated and holistic approach;

(h) The functional relationship between sustainable traditional management of the environment and the social, cultural and spiritual system of the local population within the framework of the management of natural resources.

9. Finally, the Panel proposes to consider benchmarks relating to the threshold of poverty, to the decrease of emigration and to the promotion of certain social categories, in particular, women and youth.

10. In the reports submitted by the Parties of the Convention, the Panel at the third session of the COP in Recife, Brazil, noticed that traditional knowledge had not been sufficiently taken into account. That was due not only to the fact that the Parties had had a very short time to elaborate their national reports, but also to the lack of terms of reference on this issue on the format and content of reports adopted by COP in its decision 11/COP.1. Some of the national and subregional reports do mention traditional knowledge and some regional thematic networks included traditional knowledge within their activities.

11. Within the formats adopted by the Conference of the Parties in its decision 11/COP.1 relating to the procedures for communication of information and review of the implementation of the Convention, traditional knowledge is not mentioned among the elements that should be included in the reports on the measures that each Party has taken in order to implement the Convention. Furthermore, the non-integration of traditional knowledge results in the regional networks, regional coordinating units and national centres of liaison created within the framework of the implementation of the Convention from:

(a) Non-efficient integration between traditional knowledge and scientific and technological experience;

(b) Lack of promotion of information and communication channels and supports;

(c) Weakness of the systems to collect data and make an inventory of knowledge;

(d) Weak enhancement of local knowledge.

12. In order to solve the above-mentioned problems, it is necessary to evaluate the existing methods and/or, if need be, develop a method taking into account the following items:

(a) Strengthening the capacity of basic community organizations;

(b) Developing a partnership and exchanges between the different actors;

(c) Improving the systems of data collection and inventory of local knowledge;

(d) Promoting channels and supports to disseminate information;

(e) Elaborating methods and procedures of integrating traditional knowledge and technical-scientific experience.

13. In the Rio conventions, which are similar to the UNCCD, elements such as deforestation, greenhouse gas, loss of biological species can be measured. In the Convention to Combat Desertification there are some key issues, such as traditional knowledge, that take into account socio-cultural, economic and ecological dimensions. Some of these components can hardly be measured for several reasons:

(a) Lack of available information and data;

(b) The socio-cultural contexts can only be analysed in terms of quality rather than quantity;

(c) In the field, given the interaction between the different elements, quantification is not always feasible.

14. The reasons why traditional techniques are not applied can be summarized as follows:

(a) A lack of awareness that environmental damage, soil degradation and desertification mostly result from the loss of traditional knowledge;

(b) A lack of information from technicians involved in national planning on the validity and benefits of traditional knowledge;

(c) A lack of information on the role to be assigned to traditional techniques and their operation;

(d) A lack of communication and exchange of successful experiences;

(e) A lack of awareness of the innovative use of traditional knowledge;

(f) Prejudices and the dissemination of criticisms of traditional knowledge.

15. The problems mentioned above result from a lack of information and communication. Some common prejudices, as mentioned in the last point, are given below, each with a refutation.

1. Traditional techniques constitute a specific and limited series of technical solutions.

16. The proposal is contradicted by the very same definition of traditional knowledge as an integrated learning organization, a complex system with multifunctional characteristics, an integral part of the collective identity's as well as social cohesion's construction process. Taking it as a series of expedients to solve specific problems is reductive and deceptive. Each traditional practice responds to a specific necessity but is highly integrated with the environmental and social context, and is part of a complex whole of social, ecological but also symbolic and aesthetic values.

2. They are not technologically competitive, with the result that they are technologically inefficient and less productive than modern technologies.

17. This critique is not justified since there is no reason to consider traditional techniques as less competitive, inefficient or unproductive than modern techniques. Traditional technology considers a series of contextual factors omitted by modern techniques, and results differ. The procedure is sometimes not that immediate and needs more work, however, this does not represent a negative feature in many countries that face unemployment problems. In order to assess the efficiency of a process, both internal and external aspects are considered. Indeed, the application of a technique determines the effects from the cradle to the grave of the necessary use of resources and has more general consequences on the entire economic, social and environmental system. These interactions are not taken into account in a modern technique based on specific and immediate yield criteria. On the contrary, traditional techniques are selected and accepted through a process of environmental, historical and social comparisons. Their efficiency is appraised according to their validity over the long term, their contextual benefits and their full sustainability.

3. Traditional techniques concern the developing world and are marginal compared to great economic and technological processes.

18. This is contradicted by the fact that the continuing consolidation and stabilization of the role of traditional technologies in society and in the economy can be verified, specifically in the more advanced countries. The traditional values, manufacturing practices and artisan capacities of traditional technologies are the basis on which is founded the great added value of yields of enormous economic importance for many advanced countries. In particular, typical alimentary produce (such as oil, cheese and wine) safeguards the quality of the land, both aesthetic and environmental, since old production systems are available thanks to the maintenance of traditional techniques of soil management. In the same field, increasing agricultural yields and quantities of biologically controlled meat are the result of even more interest in traditional techniques of cultivation and breeding. These considerations are true even in other sectors from quality gadgets to haute couture and from real estate to the building market. It is an advantage for the most renowned manufacturers to be able to list the traditional techniques they use and the success of many companies is actually due to having incorporated traditional techniques into their processes or to be located in traditional environments or historical centres.

4. They are proposed because of an ideological anti-technological vision

19. The fourth critique is to be rejected since, even if in the traditional knowledge movement there are some anti-technological components, on the whole, it is not true at all. Traditional knowledge is not proposed because it contains less technology compared to the conventional ones, but because it has better results, technologically speaking, compared to the determined

environmental and social context. Sometimes, it has the most refined technologies, some other times, it is very simple but still more appropriate, and is ecologically compatible and locally manageable. Furthermore, traditional knowledge is re-proposed through each single possible innovative use that is in conjunction with modern technologies which can operate within the same logic. As a matter of fact, it is the principle of traditional knowledge that is useful to spread and copy not the technique itself. This is actually possible thanks to the use of the most advanced technologies in the field of eco-energies, recycling, pollution-free production, and maintenance of old procedures thanks to low-impact processes of mechanization that are self-manageable.

20. The benefits of a technology are multifaceted according to the scales through which they can be observed. Within a macro-economic framework based on modern econometric principles, traditional technologies can be considered as marginal. However, from local and environmental points of view, traditional knowledge and its technology plays a primary role.

21. In order to understand the benefits of traditional knowledge, it is necessary to take into account the desertification process. Therefore, we can state that traditional knowledge:

- is ecologically adapted and viable;
- represents the skills of populations;
- is less expensive.

22. From a different point of view and taking into consideration the external constraints modern technologies can be transferred more easily than traditional knowledge which must be considered within its socio-cultural context. However, this is not easily done since the transfer method is not always available.

23. At a national level, a State must take the above-mentioned consideration into account. Moreover, in order to encourage the interest raised by traditional knowledge at the socio-economic and ecological levels, the Parties play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment and mentioning general obligations as well as the obligations of the affected Country Parties of the Convention under articles 4 and 5.

24. Furthermore, the Parties should make sure that technologies, knowledge, know-how and traditional practices are adequately protected and that local populations benefit on an equitable basis (in accordance with articles 1 and 5 of the Convention) of any resulting commercial activity or of any resulting technological development. These activities carried out by the States could create favourable conditions to maintain, produce and reproduce further knowledge and integrate it with modern technology and innovations.

25. Our environment is changing more and more rapidly in an unpredictable way due to internal and external pressures such as industrialization, agricultural mechanization, and the burden of debt, thus hindering the proper control of a sustainable nature resource management. At a local and national level, the enhancement of traditional knowledge and its integration in the way of managing and within a cultural context could be a possible answer to such pressures.

26. The answer to these pressures could be given by a small number of pertinent indicators of the key issues. The indicators should be simple, user-friendly and based on the existing and obtainable data. Such indicators will take into account the following environmental and socio-economic conditions: poverty, land abandonment, emigration, cultural dependency and loss of cultural identity.

27. They should also take into account the following socio-economic and environmental impact:

(a) Creation of new needs and expectations;

(b) The real participation of women, the elders as well as others from traditional and social categories;

(c) The loss of traditional rights; and

(d) Changes in the ways of access to water and land.

28. At the forums organized by the UNCCD secretariat in collaboration with the Mayor of Rome and the Mayor of Bonn, the mayors have shown their interest in the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. These forums focused on uncontrolled urbanization due to its high costs in terms of infrastructure, crime and urban equipment. These towns can no longer afford such high costs.

29. One example of how it is possible to decrease such costs is Cinque Terre, located in Liguria, Italy. In a village where the land has been completely abandoned and subsequently become subject to degradation, the mayors have granted parcels of land to persons who committed themselves to cultivate them by means of traditional techniques. Therefore, agricultural terraces have been re-built, crops re-planted and the soil replenished, thus increasing tourism. Nowadays, the resulting products are considered as traditional biological products and sold at a higher price. Some innovations have been implemented in order to enable terrace management along the slopes, thus avoiding the hard work that was required in the past for its maintenance. Thanks to the Internet it is possible to sell the products all over the world.

III. COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF THE TERM TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE[1]

30. "Traditional knowledge consists of practical (instrumental) and normative (enabling) knowledge about the ecological, socio-economic and cultural environment. Traditional knowledge is people-centred (generated and transmitted by people as knowledgeable, competent and entitled actors), systemic (inter-sectorial and holistic), experimental (empirical and practical), transmitted from one generation to the next and culturally valorised. This type of knowledge promotes diversity; it valorises and reproduces the local (internal) resources."

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Criteria to measure the reciprocity between traditional knowledge and modern knowledge and/or promote it

31. To assess reciprocity, the ad hoc Panel understands, on the basis of the common understanding of traditional knowledge that:

(a) Traditional knowledge consists of practical (instrumental) and normative (enabling) knowledge about the ecological, socio-economic and cultural environment, as defined in ICCD/COP(3)/CST/3;

(b) The term "knowledge" is defined as a knowledge system (traditional knowledge and modern knowledge) composed of content, roles, institutions and theoretical concepts, which are produced and reproduced in an enabling cultural and natural environment;

(c) The term "reciprocity" is defined as a relationship between two knowledge systems based on equity and mutual benefit.

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[1] See ICCD/COP(3)/CST/3.

32. To promote reciprocity between traditional and modern knowledge t implement programmes to combat desertification, the following questions shou be asked:

(a) Do the mechanisms enable and promote affected communities to use a develop their traditional knowledge in combating drought and desertificatio

(b) If yes, are the means adequate to meet their needs?

33. The measurable indicators to assess if the above criteria are fulfill include, as a ratio between traditional and modern knowledge:

(a) The amount of funds given to communities who apply tradition knowledge;

(b) The number of contracts and/or projects given to them to utili traditional knowledge;

(c) The number of research projects and projects on tradition knowledge implemented in partnership with communities.

B. Criteria to assess how networks and mechanisms created by the secretariat (regional networks, regional coordinating bodies, national focal points) are incorporating traditional knowledge and local knowledge in their work programmes

34. The ad hoc Panel invites the Conference of the Parties to encoura Parties, through National Focal Points, according to their respecti capabilities and subject to their respective national legislation and/ policies:

(a) To analyse the existing mechanisms;

(b) To recognize the role, utility and sustainability of tradition knowledge;

(c) To assess how networks incorporate traditional and local knowled into their work programme by using following criteria;

(d) to assess the number of research and development projec implemented by the National Action Programmes in partnership with experts traditional knowledge using the following indicators: (i) to prevent the lo of traditional knowledge; (ii) to rehabilitate institutions of tradition knowledge; and (iii) to rebuild, where necessary, adequate mechanisms th generate, test and disseminate traditional knowledge.

C. Criteria to assess the socio-economic and ecological benefits of traditional knowledge in the light of environmental changes

35. To assess the socio-economic benefits of traditional knowledge, the ad h Panel recommends assessment of the National Action Programmes to discover they have established mechanisms that allow communities affected by drought a desertification:

(a) To choose between remedies derived from traditional knowledge a modern knowledge to revitalize and reclaim affected areas;

(b) To carefully pre-evaluate and document proposed projects by usi an evaluation grid including the five dimensions of sustainabili (institutional, social, technical, economic and environmental);

(c) To maintain and, if necessary, develop long-term entitlements of local communities to the land and water resources of their environment.

36. The ad hoc Panel further recommends the use of criteria derived from the policies of the Convention to assess the benefits of traditional knowledge in the light of environmental changes based on the following steps:

(a) To take traditional knowledge as a starting point of the assessment;

(b) To evaluate the social, institutional, ecological and economic conditions of reproduction of traditional knowledge;

(c) To assess its instrumentality for the implementation of the objectives of the Convention;

(d) To evaluate its socio-economic and environmental benefits using UNCCD criteria.

37. Proposed UNCCD criteria are:

(a) In the area of socio-economic benefits, *inter alia*: self-sufficiency in food production, poverty alleviation and improvement of livelihood, gender equality and employment;

(b) In the area of environmental benefits, *inter alia*: adaptation to a changing environment, improvement of the ecosystem, protection of natural resources and protection of fragile ecosystems and their biodiversity.

38. The ad hoc Panel also recommends an assessment of the existence of instruments to protect traditional knowledge in the context of a free-market competition, in accordance with article 18.1(e) of the Convention.

39. To develop criteria to assist in the selection of suitable technologies, the following should be taken into consideration:

(a) Social, economic and environmental sustainability;

(b) Socio-economic conditions of the area/ecosystem to which such technologies will be applied;

(c) Role of traditional knowledge and of the communities that are applying, reproducing and improving the said knowledge;

(d) Process of reciprocity of traditional and modern knowledge, to be furthered through appropriate arrangements.

V. FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

40. The ad hoc Panel reviewed the whole work undertaken on traditional knowledge and the documents endorsed by the different sessions of the Conference of the Parties. Taking into account the outcome of the discussions held in Matera, the ad hoc Panel also recommended the following:

41. A network of experts, institutions, organizations and bodies having experience in the field of traditional knowledge should be established. This network should comprise experts on traditional as well as modern knowledge and having expertise on dialogues between different knowledge systems. These experts should:

(a) Compile data on existing traditional knowledge;

(b) Advise decision makers on the design and implementation of research and development programmes related to the Convention, as well as assist in monitoring and evaluating them;

(c) Advise National Focal Points and National Coordination Bodies on how to establish cooperation in the fields of transfer, adaptation and dissemination of traditional and modern knowledge;

(d) Encourage National Focal Points to promote communications and technical exchanges on traditional and modern knowledge between the Parties;

(e) Disseminate information to the public on imported technologies through the appropriate channels.

42. A working group of representatives of institutions should be set up with the purpose of defining terms of reference for national and regional inventories of traditional and local knowledge. These inventories should contain data and information on: (a) social and economic benefits; (b) environmental benefits; and (c) conditions of reproduction and evolution of traditional knowledge.

43. The ad hoc Panel took note that the Italian authorities are in the process of establishing an international research centre on traditional knowledge in Matera, Italy, in collaboration with UNESCO and the secretariat of UNCCD. The ad hoc Panel congratulates such initiatives and encourages all countries or regions to do same and/or to create linkages with the centre in Matera.

44. In consideration of the effectiveness of the implementation of the UNCCD at national level, the ad hoc Panel also recommends:

(a) Dissemination of information on the basis of the existing inventories;

(b) Identification of specific action to be incorporated into national action programs;

(c) Identification of possible technical and financial support to implement these complementary activities.

45. The Panel also recommended consideration by the network of the importance of dialogue between traditional and modern knowledge prior to the implementation of an imported practice.

46. Recalling decisions 12/COP.3 and 15/COP.3 on the roster of independent experts, the ad hoc Panel invites Parties to ensure better representation of disciplines in the area of cultural anthropology, oral history, history of technology and law, and encourages the inclusion of experts on traditional knowledge in the roster.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Members of the ad hoc Panel on Traditional Knowledge appointed by the Conference of the Parties and consultants presenting reports at the Matera Meeting

Dr. Falah Abounukta	Syrian Arab Republic
Mr. Etumesaku Diunganumbe	Democratic Republic of Congo
Dr. Pietro Laureano	Italy
Mrs. Nery Urquiza	Cuba
Mr. Ashot Verdevanian	Armenia
Dr. Corinne Wacker	Switzerland

Consultants presenting reports at the Matera Meeting

Mr. Emmanuel Seck:	Report on the consideration of local knowledge by the action programmes, networks and mechanisms set up by the UNCCD secretariat to promote programmes combating desertification on the regional and national scales
Mr. Yang Youlin:	Report on the measurement of the reciprocity between traditional and modern knowledge and their promotion
Dr. Pietro Laureano:	Appraisal criteria of traditional knowledge from the national focal points

Members presenting reports at the Matera Meeting

Dr. Corinne Wacker:	Incorporating traditional knowledge in the implementation of the Convention through appropriate assessments

Observers at the ad hoc Panel

Dr. Thomas Schaaf	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Dr. Domenica Sabia	Italy
Dr. Maurizio Sciortino	Italy
Mrs. Stefania Viti	Italy

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Annex II

Agenda of the ad hoc Panel on Traditional Knowledge

Monday, 8 May 2000

Election of the Chairman of the ad hoc Panel
Welcoming Statement by a Representative of the Italian Ministry of Environment
Opening of the Panel Meeting by the Chairman of the ad hoc Panel Meeting
Remarks by the representative of the UNCCD secretariat
Appointment of topic Chairs and rapporteurs

Tuesday, 9 May 2000

Topic 1: Develop appropriate criteria in line with future work on benchmarks and indicators, to be used by national focal point so as to measure the reciprocity between traditional and modern knowledge and/or promote it.

Presentation and discussion of Topic 1

Wednesday, 10 May 2000

Conclusion of Topic 1

Topic 2: Develop appropriate criteria in line with future work on benchmarks and indicators, to be used by national focal point so as to assess the socio-economic and ecological benefits of traditional knowledge in light of environmental changes.

Presentation, discussion and conclusion of Topic 2

Thursday, 11 May 2000

Topic 3: Develop appropriate criteria in line with future work on benchmarks and indicators, to be used by national focal point so as to assess how networks and mechanism created by UNCCD secretariat (regional networks, regional bodies, national focal points) are incorporating traditional and local knowledge in their work programmes.

Presentation, discussion and conclusion of Topic 3

Friday, 12 May 2000

Adoption of the conclusions of the meeting

Adoption of the report

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